

DC Council's Recently Proposed Amendment to the DCPS Budget
Frequently Asked Questions
May 21, 2009

What action has the DC Council taken concerning the DCPS FY10 budget?

On May 12th, the DC Council has proposed and approved an amendment that sets aside \$27.5M from the DCPS budget for the coming school year. Each year, DCPS requests its budget based on the number of students expected to be enrolled in DCPS for the coming year. The DC Council wants to be sure that the DCPS budget is based on an accurate number of students, and that this number is derived from correct data.

Therefore, Council has recommended reducing the DCPS budget by \$27.5 million, and will set this money aside until they are satisfied that the number of students DCPS serves justifies the amount of the full budget.

Why is setting aside these funds a problem for DCPS?

It is against the law to staff positions unless the entire salary for that person is available in the budget when the person is hired. Therefore, this set-aside has the same result as a cut because in order to comply with the amendment, 338 teachers would have to be cut from the budget. Council-restored funds coming into schools at some point into the school year will not prevent this loss of teachers.

Why can't these funds be taken from the central office budget?

Central office spending has been reduced by 8% or \$8 million in the last two years. At that same time, funding to local schools has increased by \$28 million. The central office budget is already encumbered for the expenditures necessary to operate a school system with nearly 7,000 employees--utilities, security, food services, student data systems, summer school, afterschool programs, payroll, human resources and procurement.

What is the discrepancy between Council enrollment projection numbers and DCPS projections?

The Council suggests that DCPS projects an increase of 3,000 students for the next school year, while Council's own numbers project an increase of 373 students. However, if considering the actual enrollment of 47,183 students enrolled in DCPS as of last week, DCPS is actually projecting a decrease in enrollment.

Where do DCPS' enrollment projections come from?

The Brookings Institution, the Urban Institute and the 21st Century School Fund have completed an extensive demographic analysis modeling DCPS enrollment. Based on their model, DCPS estimates FY10 enrollment at 45,054. Audited enrollment numbers for the 2009-2010 school year from the firm of Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio & Associates will be available in January 2010. The only number available to Council in October—Council's projected time for releasing the funds with audited enrollment data—will be the DCPS STARS data, which we supply to the

auditors before they do their actual audit. Last fall that number was 46,212. DCPS is projecting that number at 45,054 for next year – a decrease of over 1,000 students.

Why has DCPS also projected losing fewer students next year than in recent years?

- Over the course of the current school year, DCPS has seen an increase of nearly 1,000 students.
- Students are exiting DCPS at a slower rate in the middle grades because 21 schools have begun or completed their transition to preK-8 schools.
- Grade expansions at schools like Shaw, Youth Engagement Academy and Phelps—which received applications from students formerly in non-public schools--will help DCPS to retain students.
- DCPS is adding new pre-school and pre-kindergarten seats.
- The transitions of 6th grades from elementary to middle schools last year increased the rate at which students exited DCPS in the 2008-2009 school year. The 6th grade shifts are much more limited this year, so a much lower exit rate at that level is anticipated.
- Last year's school closings increased the rate of exit from DCPS. We will not have anything close to that level of disruption this year.
- The impact of the national economy along with applications received from former private school students indicates that more families may return to public schools in light of the faltering economy.

Why does this change affect school budgets now?

DCPS undertook a comprehensive community engagement process to develop the district and school based budgets this year. The early and comprehensive school budgeting process has allowed us to identify school needs and staffing vacancies early. As such, schools have already begun to recruit teachers to fill positions to ensure a smooth and successful opening in August. To adjust to the \$27.5 set-aside DCPS must stop this work, reduce school budgets, and revise school positions.

What does this mean for my child and his/her school?

A chart detailing changes to individual school budgets is available at www.k12.dc.us.

What if I participated in creating my school's budget? Is my input still reflected?

DCPS worked with local school communities and accelerated the development of local school budgets to make next year's school programs and offerings available

early. The proposed amendment suggests a new and tight timeline in terms of budget revisions and reductions. DCPS will do its best to work on revised budgets with school communities within those practical limits.

How will community input be taken into consideration before the vote?

At this point in time the DC Council has jurisdiction over this process. Just as DCPS has used community input to inform school budgeting, Council is committed to considering community input and has shown an interest in the past for remedying situations when decisions were based on inaccurate or incomplete information.

Will the DC Council have an opportunity to reconsider its action?

The Council must approve the Budget Support Act on a second vote, which may be as soon as June 2. The Council could substantially relieve the problem by releasing the disputed funding to DCPS.